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## **Progress Report for *Kivotoruk Moses, Inupiaq Folk Artist Project***

The past two years have seen much progress on my Kivotoruk book project. Research throughout Alaska and elsewhere has greatly increased the amount of information at my disposal. The subject of James Kivotoruk Moses and his art is now coming into a shape that will reach a conclusion for the book in late 2012 and the commencement of a large survey exhibition the next year. While I had accumulated much material over the years in advance of the grant, the Beringia Heritage support enabled me to gain a great deal more and focused my efforts. The exhibition has been set up with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Museum of the North for the first quarter of 2014. The book will accompany the exhibit and serve as catalog. The Alaska State Museum is also planning to host the exhibit and several other institutions are considering showing it as well.

The research portion of the project taking place during 2009-2010 was chiefly focused on travel for interviews, viewing of artworks, viewing of pertinent locales, collection of archival materials, and obtaining high quality digital images. I travelled to Nome, several times, Shishmaref, Singeak near Cape Espenberg, Anchorage, Juneau and Washington D.C. as well as to Anadyr for the Beringia Days conference in 2009. Ronald Senungetuk accompanied me on the first trip to Nome and Shishmaref and provided invaluable aid in finding and meeting people.

Interviews were conducted with numerous people, most of them with first-hand accounts of their experiences with James Kivotoruk Moses. Of course some of these individuals were children during Moses' later years since he died in 1982 at age 80 years. They often spoke of their own older relatives' relationships to Moses. Interviews were conducted in Nome, Shishmaref, Juneau, Anchorage, and Fairbanks. An appendix of the more important ones is attached to this report. (An additional appendix attached is my poster presentation for the Nome Beringia Days conference earlier this month.)

Valuable information was also gathered during trips to Anchorage where I examined materials at the Wells Fargo Bank Museum which has several pictures. The Anchorage Museum has many pictures which remain to be fully documented but I did go through their archive of printed materials and examined a dozen works in the collection. The National Archives in Anchorage have the records of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I went through many boxes of that archive and found some very useful material. I also have visited several private collectors to see the Moses work in their collections.

I travelled to Juneau to examine the Moses pieces in the collections of the Alaska State Museum. They own about 30 pictures and have a considerable archive of printed materials as well. The Alaska State Library proved to have an important archive related to Moses as well. I found hitherto unknown plans for a house that he designed. They also have all the photographs that Edward Keithahn took in Shishmaref in 1923, including ones of James and Bessie as young adults. I plan to return to Juneau to examine carefully the remainder of that archive.

A major trip of value to the project took place in spring 2009, when I travelled to Washington D. C. to view the very fine collection of 29 works at the National Museum of the American Indian. These works were purchased by the I.A.C.B. in the 1960s and 70s. They have been recently transferred to NMAI and have not been seen since the days of their original purchase. I plan to use many of them in the book and exhibit. I also was able to establish contact with the museum and began discussions about the future exhibit.

One of the problematical aspects of the project has been getting good quality photographs of the works found in Nome and even in the major museums where little has been done to document the images. I used a small portion of the grant to purchase professional lights so that I could just do the photography myself. I'm now able to take quality photos of the works in remote and not so remote locations, even through glass which has been a problem in the past. My recent trip to Beringia Days in Nome gave me the opportunity to photograph a dozen pictures, including five unique and little seen ones that I was unaware of beforehand. Five rare and excellent unique images were photographed at the Carrie M. McLain Museum. This small museum is about to embark on a major expansion which will enable them to host the planned Moses exhibition in 2014. The ability to take my own photographs will help bring down the costs for the book. I now plan to take my own pictures in Juneau and Anchorage and hope to secure additional support for that effort.

The 2009 Beringia Days in Anadyr' was also a very useful trip for me. Because there was a native culture festival taking place in conjunction with the conference, I was able to become familiar with Chukchi Native clothing, artifacts and housing as well as dance ceremonies. The new museum in Anadyr' was also an excellent source of first hand visual information for me. The importance to the project relates to the fact that Moses had close ties to the Russian side of the Bering Straits and depicted many tales of Russian visitors and Chukotkans in his pictures. In his early years, he took part in the annual trading exchanges with visiting Chukchi and claimed that some of his relatives were originally from the Russian side.

A research centerpiece for the whole project was this summer's trip to Singeak on Cape Espenberg. It had been a somewhat difficult place to get to because of the weather but after a failed attempt in summer 2009 when I tried to go by boat from Shishmaref and a repeat of the poor weather in 2010, I traveled by Cessna 206 out of Kotzebue this year. James Kivetoruk's house is still standing at Singeak was the base of his operations for forty years. It was a very moving experience to see the place in person and to come to understand the place as it relates to his pictures. The great majority of his work is based on his experiences at Singeak and nearby places such as Ublasaun and Devil Mountain Lakes. The experience, photographs and notes from this trip will provide a center for the book.

Work remaining to be done consists of further writing of the manuscript, curatorial tasks associated with the exhibit, and some continuing research to gather information and images. Formal discussions have take place with the likely publisher for the book, University of Alaska Press but a definitive agreement will not be possible until the manuscript is finished. Artwork for the exhibit has largely been identified except for a closer examination of the Anchorage Museum's collection. Two

venues for the exhibit are on board and others will be formally approached soon, some being informally approached already.

One research area that needs further study is the Moses relationship with art collectors and dealers. I have identified several of these entrepreneurs and individuals who are still alive and willing to be interviewed but do not want to do it over the phone. I expect to accomplish some of these interviews this coming winter. Curatorial work such as formal borrowing agreements, framing, label copy and other exhibit requirements have yet to be done.

In summary, much was accomplished on the project during the period 2009-2010. Research has progressed in surprising ways and nears completion. The text of the book is underway and the preparations for the exhibit have commenced. The scope and amount of information seems to expand the more I look into the life and work of Kivatoruk but a substantially inclusive book and exhibit are within grasp. Some further research is needed but the real work remaining consists of formatting, organizing and writing the book and curatorial tasks for the exhibit.

## **I. Appendix to the Interviews**

In Nome I spoke with the following individuals among others, all of whom had useful information:

Guy Martin, Moses' paperboy and enthusiast of his artworks

Ella Tanner, friend of the Moses family, especially Bessie Moses

Leo Rasmussen, friend and collector of Moses' drawings

Mary Jane Litchard, grand niece of Moses

Tunny Walluk, relative

Mary Knodel, dealer of Moses' work at Arctic Trader shop

Lavonne Okleasik, archivist at Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Pat Hahn, son of Bonnie Dunbar, friend of the Moses family and owner of his last picture

In Shishmaref, the following were interviewed:

Clifford Weyiouanna, student of Bessie's and friend of Moses' daughter Catherine

Albert Ningeulook, son of Moses' close friend and cousin, Ray Ningeulook

Harold Olanna, youngest member of famous mermaid sighting hunting party led by Moses

Delano Barr, son of Gideon Barr from Cape Espenberg

Dennis Sinnok, Tony Weyiouanna, and Fred Eningowuk also contributed info.

Serge Bogojavlensky and Elton Engstrom were interviewed in Anchorage and Juneau respectively. Both had relationships with Moses as collectors. Bogojavlensky was working in Nome as an anthropologist in the 1970's and got to know Bessie and James fairly well through numerous visits to their home. Glen Simpson was interviewed in Fairbanks and told of his two visits to Moses in Nome in the 1970s. Several other individual collectors and art dealers in Anchorage and Fairbanks were interviewed as well.

## **II. Appendix--Nome Beringia Days Poster Presentation**

# Kivietoruk Moses

A BOOK AND EXHIBITION PROJECT BY DAVID MOLLETT

James Kivietoruk Moses (1902-1982) who was born and raised at Cape Espenberg on the northern tip of the Seward Peninsula was foremost among his contemporaries in the field of Alaskan Eskimo graphic art. Active as an artist from the 1950's through the 1970's, he depicted historical events, specific people, legends and daily activities of the Inupiat. He had a special interest in the people on the Russian side of the Bering Sea who he believed lived a lifestyle largely unspoiled by western culture. The detailed and carefully observed realities in his pictures make him a unique and important artist who visually documents a time and place little seen and recorded.



The scope of this project is focused on a comprehensive book and exhibit of Kivietoruk's work. The show is scheduled for 2013 at the University of Alaska Museum of the North and will travel to the Alaska State Museum as well as other venues (very likely the new museum to be constructed soon in Nome). The book will survey the work and life of Moses, making connections between the man, the place and the times. The exhibition will draw on the collections of the Alaska State Museum, the UAF Museum of the North, the Anchorage Museum and the little seen holdings of the National Museum of the American Indian as well as private and public individuals and institutions.

Thanks to the National Park Service and the Beringia Heritage Program for their support for this project



*Polar Bear Family* (1951), mixed media, private collection  
Short caption written by James Moses on corrugated cardboard backing



Moses (I am sure of Kivietoruk's pictures have a subtle accuracy touched. James Moses, James who was born in 1902, wrote on these pictures that I have seen others from his child. Moses said to the business agent for the family, bringing up a stark, retrospective work of these pictures to his drawings. He showed me of the talking when Moses made a call and has a color picture. The picture is called in many pictures as well. Kivietoruk's day to day life is not very closely to his other much-graphical images.



*Sagood, the Swimming Eskimo* (1951), mixed media, 12x17", private collection  
One of these great features who lived at Cape Espenberg. They had scuffed heads and feet and killed whales. J.E. Moses was a large whale head carried for inland.



Moses would make several if not many of his most popular pictures. Like his brother-in-law, George Nagayuk and nephew, Wilbur Naluk, he struggled to make a living as an artist. Kivietoruk's pictures tended to evolve over time and always kept up a very high standard of quality. Each picture had a signature of detailed rendering that could not be missed. The subsequent success of his pictures making earned him as much the number of accepted commissions in his later years.

This image which is one of the most surprising and interesting of his subjects, concerns a disease who is concerned about his own, entering the one world on the ice pack. He composed up his deceased mother by way of an old (the dead figure) and she shows him the rope with animal head that he made for his boys. She tells him they are alive on the Siberian side of the sea and that they will return by boat. For the annual making of Kivietoruk. The picture shows many of the important objects for hunting and daily life in the forest in the old dwellings and of camp, meals, hunting gear and ice tools, bone and ivory, sealblades, walrus, pieces pipe, tobacco pouch, and smoking pot.

(Short images are featured in the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, formerly from the National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution)

The work of James Kivietoruk Moses compares favorably to the foremost American folk artists such as Edward Hicks and Grandma Moses (no relation). These artists while aware of the wider art world, made work that served primarily as autobiography and documentation of their lives, culture and times. Kivietoruk's obsession with detail and accurate color has as much to do with an allegiance to verisimilitude as it has to do with artistic accomplishment. All his outdoor pictures strive to make clear the season, clearly identify the location and reveal the specific truth of the narrative with carefully rendered objects, people and landscape. The mechanical sense of things is always clearly thought out and depicted accordingly. The clothing of every person shown has clearly identifiable animal furs as well as design detailing that associates the costume with the stature, nationality and identity of the subject. Kivietoruk's pride in culture is paramount in every picture.

# Inupiaq Folk Artist



This summer's research trip to Inupiaq, the traditional home of Kivimutuk and his family, has been especially important in an understanding of the land and the work. His house is still standing (part of this the practical reason of it's location is being here) but there are many of the old and new for hunting, fishing and the making of tools. The family have purchased some more to the shipping office in the Great Inupiaq Lake (the house is about 10 miles). The house is this summer in a large fragment of a old wooden ship which likely is a remnant of a whaling vessel damaged in the pack ice conditions of the big blizzard that came west through in the 1940s. When much of the old whaling industry, which depended on the whaling ships that passed by on a regular basis during his youth back in the 1940s.

U.S. Coast "Station" Inupiaq who continued the Alaska Territorial Guard during WWII, and a 1940s era house only in the remote spot on his hunting trip from Inupiaq to Inupiaq in 1942. The account of the day with the family of two in the original quarter of all the north hunting for the first time in the 1940s.



John Buckland Sr. and his son John Buckland Jr. traded up the coast to Barrow every summer from 1906 to 1938. Most of these trips were made in the schooner C. S. Buckland. James Kivimutuk, Masek was one of the Eskimo trappers who worked with the Bucklands on a regular basis. His picture called "Kivimutuk's Whaler Ship" is possibly making claim to a blood relationship with the man. Buckland senior's prominent wave of hair over his forehead establishes his identity clearly and the detailing of the rigging behind him is obviously the deck of the C. S. Buckland. NMAI collection.



Celebration at the End of WWII, museum media, collection NMAI. Masek was a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard.



James Kivimutuk and Denise in Barrow, circa 1970. photo courtesy of Rita Masek



The two pictures below represent the U.S. Coast Guard, which was sent to Inupiaq during the war. This is a large account of a typical whaling season, and the story of the ship. The other is a story of a whaling season between James Kivimutuk and his family. The picture of the ship is called by Denise Masek as the story which they moved to Inupiaq, were together from the accident.



Kivimutuk worked as a reindeer herder with his wife in Umanuk near Cape Enderby in the 1920's. He moved to Inupiaq with Denise in the 1930's. They also had a house in Umanuk indicating the high degree of success in trapping.



This picture of an Eskimo couple posing in front of their old house, sled, dogs and drying racks is reminiscent of the Inupiaq painting American (Cobbie by Grant Wood and springs from the same pride in family and culture that everyone shares.



Picture of the National Archives in Washington. National Museum of the American Indian. (Cobbie) Denise Masek, Inupiaq Museum and U.S. Museum of the North for the use of high resolution images.